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From 'Blue and White Porcelain' to 'Island's Sunrise': Young audience perceptions of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness in Taiwan's popular music

ABSTRACT

This article explores how Chineseness and Taiwaneseness are constructed in Taiwan's popular music and the ways in which young audiences in Taiwan make sense of the music to which they listen in their everyday lives. Focusing on two songs, Jay Chou's 'Blue and White Porcelain' (a China Wind pop song in Mandarin Chinese) and Fire Ex's 'Island's Sunrise' (an indie rock song sung in Taiwanese Hokkien), an analysis of the lyrics, styles and settings identifies the textual and contextual characteristics that shape and signify their Chineseness and Taiwaneseness. In-depth interviews with their 18–25-year-old audience and several music industry workers were conducted in Taipei to understand how these young audiences reflect on their experiences and identities in relation to these songs. Arguably, popular music can be implicated in the politics of identity through performing and listening. Constant

KEYWORDS

China Wind pop music
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negotiations of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness are taking place in both the creation and the consumption of music, thereby Taiwaineseness and Chineseness can be seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy as they are not mutually exclusive in their historical contexts, but rather are two sets of ever-changing narratives. The usefulness of ethnographic methods in this study should be noted as the diverse personal experiences and views voiced in the interviews illustrate clearly how the dichotomy between the two is an over-simplification.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to explore negotiations of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness in both music creation and consumption in Taiwan's popular music. Using ethnographic methods, this article focuses on a younger audience's perceptions of two songs from different music genres and in different languages. These are Jay Chou's 'Blue and White Porcelain' (qing hua ci / 青花瓷) and Fire EX.'s 'Island's Sunrise' (dao yu tian guang/ 島嶼天光).

Socio-political history has left its mark on the diversity of Taiwan's popular music. Taking post-2000 popular songs that the 18–25-year-old audience in Taiwan listen to as examples, a multiplicity of identities is revealed in the way in which these songs are experienced. From the 1970s onwards, Taiwan's Mandarin popular music industry grew while both local and transnational companies invested in music production. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan's popular music has evolved into more diverse music styles; Mandopop,[1] Taiyupop, Hakka and indigenous music, and later on the independent music scene, have produced a variety of cultural sounds and values.

Stokes emphasizes how music can perform a knowledge of a place. He also argues that music not only provides the means by which people recognize identities and places, but it also underlines the boundaries that separate them. While there is contextualized information about given songs or specific genres, music also actively articulates knowledge of the places and the listeners' relation to it (Stokes 1994: 3–5). Similarly, Taiwanese/Chinese identity has always been contested in Taiwan. From 1992 to 2015, the number of people willing to identify themselves exclusively as 'Taiwanese' and not 'Chinese' gradually increased (Election Study Center, N.C.C.U. 2016),[2] while Balderas and Stockton's (2013) research also shows that Taiwanese/Chinese identity is no longer simply a dichotomy between the Kuomintang (KMT), the nationalist party that used to control the state under a one-party authoritarian regime, and the relatively young Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) supporters. There is a more general expectation of Taiwan's self-awareness compared with twenty years ago, irrespective of political partisan affiliation.

There have been studies on China Wind pop (zhongguofeng / 中國風) music (Lan 2007; Fung 2008; Chow and de Kloet 2011) or 'Chinoiserie' (Chung 2011) music, Taiwanese identity in popular music (Ho 2015), the burgeoning 'Taiwanese/local' image (Ho 2009) and so on. However, since existing studies focus mainly on the presentation the style – especially the lyrics – studies on how the audience perceive, experience and make use of popular music as a resource while Taiwanese/Chinese identity has been shifting and changing, have been lacking.

This article addresses how music, especially popular music, can contribute to and reflect the construction of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness by

1. Mandopop generally refers to Mandarin Chinese pop music (Moskowitz 2010), while Cantopop refers to Cantonese Chinese pop music.
2. Taiwanese/Chinese identification trend distribution in Taiwan (1992/2006–2015/12) is a research project conducted by the Core Political Attitudes Trend Chart, Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

interviewing a selection of the 18–25-year-old music audience in Taiwan during December 2015–February 2016. Apart from being asked about their experience and perceptions of popular music of different genres and languages, throughout the interviews two songs in particular were mentioned by respondents: Jay Chou's 'Blue and White Porcelain' (2007), which is one of the most popular China Wind pop songs, and Fire EX.'s 'Island's Sunrise' (2014), which is a protest rock song performed during the Sunflower movement. Through a discussion and analysis of the song texts, this article will present the audience's perceptions of how this music reflects their sense of place and cultural and national identity.

METHODOLOGY: ETHNOGRAPHY, POPULAR MUSIC AND IDENTITY

The ethnography of popular music can provide details of music practices, 'ambiguities of feelings, ambivalences, confusions and strongly held beliefs' (O'Reilly 2005: 73), thereby avoiding the possibility that 'a general statement masks the interrelatedness of context' (Cohen 1993: 135), insights that are particularly valuable for the study of Taiwan's popular music audience due to the complexity of Taiwanese/Chinese identity issues that influences both the perceptions and the production of music. Ethnography offers an opportunity to examine the social context while identifying small-scale details via in-depth interviews, through which we may be able to 'challenge preconceived notions' (Cohen 1993: 135) and provide alternative perspectives.

Employing ethnographic methods, this article examines the ways in which music constructs a sense of identity, as what Frith termed as 'an experiential process' (1996: 125). This research attempts to answer these questions relating to music and identity using two main research methods: textual analysis of songs especially on the lyrical content and ethnographic writings on music audiences and music industry workers. This article will focus on the Taiwanese interviewees. In total, 33 interviews were conducted with student audience members and six interviews with musicians and music industry workers in Taipei, Taiwan, between September 2015 and February 2016.[3] All the interviews were audio recorded. The interviews with industry workers revealed their experiences of the current Chinese popular music market and its recent trends.

The audience participants were 18–25-year-old Taiwanese, who have been called a generation of 'natural independence' or 'naturally independent' (Su and Chung 2015; Zhang 2015).[4] Born after 1990, these interviewees grew up listening to China Wind music, while their experiences of the genre coincided with their growing awareness of Taiwanese identity in post-authoritarian Taiwan.[5] With a focus on the audience's experiences relating to songs such as Chou's 'Blue and White Porcelain' and Fire EX.'s 'Island's Sunrise', the following three open-ended questions were asked of the audience members in semi-structured interviews:

1. What are your musical experiences and musical preferences? Have they changed over time? Have any internal or external factors contributed towards these changes?
2. What do you remember about China Wind pop? What did you think about them in the past and what do you think about them now? Can you relate China Wind pop to your cultural memories? If so, in what way?
3. What song best represents you? Why?

3. The research was the author Lin's Ph.D. project about perceptions of Chineseness in China Wind Pop Music and the post-1990s' generation across Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and the United Kingdom. The research was carried out in accordance with the research ethics standards at each participating university including at the University of Liverpool. Participant names have been changed to protect anonymity, with the exception of some members of the music industry who agreed to or requested that their identities be revealed.

4. The term 'natural independence' or 'naturally independent' was coined by former DPP chairperson Lin I-hsiung to describe a younger generation growing up in a society in which Taiwanese independence is a mainstream ideal (Su and Chung 2015).

5. In this research, interviewees are mostly students studying at an established university and voluntarily share their musical experiences.

More follow-up questions were to be asked depending on the answers provided. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and later translated into English during analysis by one of the authors, Lin. The interview group size varied from two to five due to the interviewees' schedule and their friend groups; many indicated they preferred to be interviewed with friends. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews. The names of the participants have been changed to preserve their anonymity, except when some music industry members agreed or requested that their identities be revealed.

'BLUE AND WHITE PORCELAIN': JAY CHOU'S CHINA WIND SONG

'China Wind pop' is a style of Mandarin pop music (Mandopop) popularized by Taiwanese singers around the year 2000 and that fuses the sound of traditional Chinese music instruments with vivid lyrical reference to Chinese culture. Although the incorporation of traditional Chinese music elements and western pop music styles, such as hip hop and R&B, is not unprecedented, what is rather unusual is China Wind's popularity among Chinese communities worldwide. With Jay Chou's consistent productivity in China Wind songs and the efforts of other artists, such as Wang Leehom and David Tao, these songs began to develop a sound distinguishable from other Chinese pop songs (Chung 2011).

The artist most renowned for China Wind pop, Jay Chou, was born and raised in Taipei. Jay Chou started playing piano from the age of four and he specialized in western classical music in high school. He showed an early talent for song writing and composed the melodies for his entire first album and some of the lyrics. The success of this album, which he released when he was nineteen, paved the way for him to become 'Asia's hottest pop star' (Drake 2003).

Fung (2008: 79) suggests that Jay Chou's Chineseness is 'safe, compromising, and non-confrontational' in relation to the People's Republic of China (PRC) state, while Chung (2011) implies that the cultural content is intentionally ambiguous, seeking a Chinese atmosphere with which most ethnic Chinese who reside outside the PRC can identify with. While listening to China Wind pop music, an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) involves a sense of nostalgia regarding a 5000-year-old culture and a sense of belonging, although the culture itself has already been reconstructed, reimagined, authorized and institutionalized. This imagined community may consist of members from the different 'symbolic universes' of cultural China[6] – Taiwan, Hong Kong and ethnic Chinese communities around the world – each member having a unique political history and playing a different role in the formulation of national discourses. Irrespective of such differences, a globalized pop music industry has facilitated the sales of pan-national Chinese music products to these divergent communities (Chua 2001).

'Blue and White Porcelain' was written by Jay Chou with lyrics by Fang Wen-Shan and was released in 2007 on his eighth album *On the Run* (wo hen mang), which became a huge success. This was the moment when Jay Chou's signature China Wind style was clearly established, and fans and the media then came to expect that there would be one or two songs of this style in all of his albums. Like most of Jay Chou's China Wind songs, this song uses a major pentatonic scale and various Chinese instruments. For example, while it is accompanied by arpeggios on electric guitar, strings, drums, the guzheng zither and Chinese flute lead the melody in the prelude, interlude, and ending. It went on to win 'Song of the Year' at the 19th Golden Melody Awards of 2008

6. Tu Wei-Ming argues that those on the periphery – such as overseas Chinese – 'play an effective role in constructing a new vision of Chineseness' (1991: 28).

in Taiwan, one of the international Chinese-speaking community's most influential music awards.

The lyrics reflect a sense of beauty in the description of the scenery and use Chinese art forms as metaphors. The chorus is as follows:

> The azure colour is waiting for the misty rain
> I'm waiting for you
> The chimney smoke rises gracefully
> Separated by the river millions of miles apart
> The base of the vase is inscribed with calligraphy
> Imitating the graceful old dynasty
> Just pretend I am longing for my meeting with you
>
> The azure colour expecting the misty rain
> I am waiting for you
> I try to touch the moon's reflections in the water
> Blurring the ending
> As if the Chinese flower pot is passed on over generations
> Caring only about its own beauty
> Your eyes carry a smile.[7]
>
> 天青色等煙　雨 而我在等妳
> 炊煙裊裊昇起 隔江千萬里
> 在瓶底書漢隸仿前朝的飄逸
> 就當我為遇見妳伏筆
> 天青色等煙雨 而我在等妳
> 月色被打撈起 暈開了結局
> 如傳世的青花瓷自顧自美麗 妳眼帶笑意

In the music video, a present-day antiques auction is taking place in which a blue and white porcelain vase is up for sale and a man and a woman experience déjà vu while reflecting on their previous lives in ancient China. Blue and white porcelain vases are suggested as eternal and significant for this relationship, which has spanned centuries. As in many of Jay Chou's songs – including 'Hair Like Snow' (2005), 'East Wind Breaks' (2003) and 'Orchid Pavilion' (2008) – there is little attempt to offer insights into Chinese modernity or the present state of China, but rather the focus is on an image of an imagined past that is ancient and sophisticated. In these music videos a nostalgic imagined Chineseness is often romanticized. This same Chineseness is commercialized (Ching 2000) and becomes a pan-national product circulated through the music industry.

EDUCATION: A BRICK OF CHINESENESS IN THE WALL

TIME magazine (Drake 2003) praised Jay Chou for the level of his artistic and creative control over his albums and videos. In the interviews conducted as part of this research, many participants shared their memories and experiences of his music. Ruby,[8] who went to elementary school in the PRC, reflected on how Jay Chou's music was important for her and her Taiwanese friends as a 'reconfiguring agency' to use DeNora's (1999) term:

> I started to listen to more pop music when I was a third-year elementary school student in the Mainland. Most Taiwanese children there were bored. We were not familiar with the outside world, so we chose to listen

7. English translation adapted by Tadgh O'Sullivan, adapted from Jay Chou Studio (http://jaychoustudio.com/).

8. Ruby, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 16 October 2015.

> to lots of music. Mainland China is huge. It took us so long to get to school. I remember how we played pop music on the coach, opened all the windows and sang along out loud. We listened to a lot of Jay Chou's songs.
>
> (Ruby)

Although Jay Chou's music is fused with many styles, while reflecting on his music it became clear that all of the interviewees had heard of his China Wind songs and identified these as his signature style. The participants who liked Jay Chou's Chinese-style music explained that this was because they associated it with a love for, or familiarity with, Chinese language and culture:

> I like JJ Lin's song 'River South (jiang nan)' […] I feel privileged to be able to understand the language and the culture, so I could appreciate its beauty. After all, we have studied the history and geography of 'the other side' for so many years […].
>
> (Becky)[9]

Familiarity with Chinese culture does not merely result from the fact that approximately 97 per cent of Taiwanese are ethnic Han (Executive Yuan 2016). This is a result of the KMT's education policies: constructing China as a 'homeland' (Chang 2010) occupied by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and declaring itself the direct descendent of Chinese culture and virtues. Although Taiwanization has gradually introduced more local perspectives into education, especially since 2000, many respondents still associate China Wind songs with their high school education:

> I easily associate the lyrics with what I learned from high school, especially history class. Even my mom finds Jay Chou's lyrics easy to like. They are beautiful and with no superfluous words.
>
> (Andrea)[10]

Rhoda[11] is a second-year student who minors in Chinese Literature. She had a habit of copying out lyrics that she likes by hand and admitted that during high school she had handwritten half of the book that Fang Wen-Shan and Jay Chou had written to explain the cultural references used in their songs.[12]

> I love hand-copying lyrics. There is one song in which Jay Chou portrays alleys in Northern China. I had never known anything like that until listening to the song […] He even uses a dialect in Northern China in his songs, and this aroused my interest in the cultural background […] I think this leads to my being more successful in Geography, Chinese Geography specifically. I have a deep appreciation of the culture.
>
> (Rhoda)

Although Rhoda is a lover of traditional Chinese literature, she still had misgivings about the education she received at high school. In a small-group interview, her friends joined the debate, underlining their ambiguous feelings towards the education associated with 'the other side', as the respondent Becky had discussed earlier:

> Rhoda: 'It might sound too political […] but why do we always have to study Chinese history to pass the exams when both sides are […] separate?'

9. Becky, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 16 October 2015.
10. Andrea, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 16 October 2015.
11. Rhoda, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 16 October 2015.
12. Fang Wen-Shan's publications include two works written in 2008 dealing with lyrics wrote several books, including *Zhong guo feng: ge ci li de wen zi you xi* (*China Wind: Word Games in Lyrics* (2008a) and *Qing hua ci: Yin cang zai you se li de wen zi mi mi* (*Blue and White Porcelain: Secret Texts Hidden in the Glaze*) (2008b).

Jenny[13]: 'Maybe I will never set foot in China in my entire life; why should I learn its history?'

Researcher: 'But if you had not learned these things, would you understand these lyrics differently?'

Rhoda: 'Very differently'

Researcher: 'So, do you think these things should be taught or not?'

Andrea: 'Maybe the number of chapters could be reduced?'.

DISTURBANCE AND DISCONNECTEDNESS

For those respondents who had heard of China Wind songs but were ambivalent about the genre, their responses ranged from identifying the repetitiveness of its themes, the feeling that China Wind pop songs were too 'rustic', to struggles with defining their relationship with the culture signified by the music:

> As far as I remember, most China Wind songs are love songs. Too many of them are about similar things.
>
> (Howard)[14]

> When I was little, the media loved to specify the 'Chinese style' that Jay Chou's music had created. Even Jay Chou himself claims that he would like to have China Wind songs on all of his albums. I had a vague feeling that, compared to western music, these songs were more local, and closer to who I am. After I grew up, I finally had the ability to decide: these songs do not have much connection with me.
>
> (Allen)[15]

Tina,[16] who suggested we had another interview a week later because she wanted to think about why she listened to pop music, stated that, intuitively speaking, she did not want to listen to any China Wind songs. She then explained why:

> I never liked this type of music even when friends around me liked it. I couldn't describe why but now I think I can. […] Deep down, I was convinced that acknowledging China was equivalent to disapproval of Taiwan. When I was little my parents told me that some businessmen and entertainers were afraid to say they were from Taiwan because of the pressure from China […].
>
> (Tina)

The Chineseness presented in China Wind songs caused a sense of disturbance in Tina's musical experience. She felt that, as a musical style, it went against some values that she held growing up in her family. Allen explained the process of defining what China Wind pop music meant to him, in which his questions of personal and Taiwanese identity became intertwined. Both of their responses show that music – whether it is enjoyed or disliked – is part of the negotiation of identities that change over time, whether on a personal or on a collective level. As Frith (2004) has suggested, defining some music as 'bad' is how listeners establish their place in various musical worlds. Apart from listeners' aesthetic judgements, a disconnectedness between 'Who I am' and

13. Jenny, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 16 October 2015.
14. Howard, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 15 October 2015.
15. Allen, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 20 October 2015.
16. Tina, personal interview in Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, 30 October 2015.

'Who the song is suggesting I am' might lead to a complex response and the decision to reject Jay Chou's China Wind songs from their favourite song lists.

TRACING THE ROOT OR FOLLOWING THE JOURNEY?

Family histories may influence the ways in which people engage with identity issues and they signify the complex essence of multifaceted identities. One interviewee, Calvin,[17] revealed this identity struggle associated with his family history during the interview. Calvin's family, whose ancestors were members of the royal family in the Qing Dynasty, has been moving across continents since the Chinese civil wars. They had to flee from the Mainland when the CPC took control because the party was anti-feudal in principle. When they came to Taiwan, the KMT also saw them as a potential threat because of their associations with a previous dynasty. They went to the United States instead, but the family returned to Taiwan about fifteen years ago and after this precarious situation was resolved. They have experienced different aspects of Chineseness along their journey:

> I've spent all my life trying to figure out my own relationship with 'China' […] My feelings have changed year by year […] I will never forget that when my whole family went to China for ancestor worship, my grandfather stood in front of the Forbidden City and said 'this could have been our home'. I thought it was a nonsense because I don't feel any connection at all […].
>
> (Calvin)

Calvin has been listening to various forms of music along his life journey: cartoon music in the United States, American ballads and Mandopop songs. He collected musical memories on his travels. Calvin's sense of disconnection from the Forbidden City, in comparison with the nostalgia and emotional bonding that his grandfather experienced, not only implies changes in Taiwanese/Chinese identity between generations, but more specifically indicates that identities are rather fluid. Even in the same family, just a few generations apart means that being 'Chinese' has different connotations.

'ISLAND'S SUNRISE': FIRE EX.'S INDIE ROCK IN TAIWANESE HOKKIEN

From 1949 to 1987, the official discourse of Taiwanese identity, if it existed, was built on the unquestionable Chineseness that the Republic of China (ROC) had to offer. Due to the history of KMT hostility to languages other than Mandarin – namely Taiwanese Hokkien and Hakka – although Taiwanese Hokkien, more widely referred to as Taiyu, is a language many speak and, lyrics in the language were less frequent in mainstream popular music until the late 1980s, in the mid-1980s, the nativist social movement and the development of a Taiwanese democratic state created a space for Taiyupop to revive and transform (Ho 2009; Ho 2015). This was referred to as the New Taiwanese Song Movement (xin taiyuge yundong). Blacklist Studio's album *Songs of Madness* (1989) was revolutionary. Since then, music acts including Wu Bai and Lim Giong have made Taiyupop more popular with the youth. Mayday, inarguably the most popular band in the Chinese-speaking world since the 2000s, have had many ground-breaking hits in Taiyu. Many members of Taiwan's music audience born after 1990 have listened to Mayday's songs when they were in school. When asked what song best represents them, Andrea answers:

17. Calvin, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 20 January 2016.

> Andrea: 'If there's a song that defines our generation, it might be 'Island's Sunrise' […] Fire EX. is known as a Taiwanese band with a strong local identity'.
>
> Researcher: 'Have you participated in the 318 Movement?'
>
> Andrea: 'We were in our final year in high school. Exams kept us busy […] I don't think I understand those issues well enough, but seeing the news, I knew we were in the middle of a significant event'.

While we were discussing musical experiences, a song that participants mentioned very often when asked what songs spoke to them most was 'Island's Sunrise' by the punk rock band Fire EX. from the southern city Kaohsiung. While 'Blue and White Porcelain' won 'Best Song' at the Golden Melody Awards in 2008, 'Island's Sunrise' won the same award in 2015. Considered by some interviewees as the best expression of their identity, this rock song sung in Taiyu was written and recorded for an exceptional occasion, as a request from protesters participating in the Sunflower Movement (318 Movement) in 2014.

On 18 March 2014, protestors broke into the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan at night and started a 24-day occupation after the ruling party KMT forced the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) with the PRC to a final vote without a clause-by-clause review as had been promised. This raised public concerns over various issues, including increased dependence on the PRC's economy. Sam Yang, the lead singer of Fire EX., entered the Legislative Yuan on 21 March, and then he wrote the song, recorded it with the band and put it online on 23 March. Unconventionally, compared with the usual production process of carefully crafted mainstream pop music, 'Island's Sunrise' was produced and released online within three days, closely linked to a social movement, and subsequently widely recognized as the movement's anthem.

'Island's Sunrise' is sung in Taiwanese Hokkien, accompanied by electric guitar, bass, drums, strings and piano. The sound of the piano throughout the whole piece brings a sense of tenderness to this rock song that is juxtaposed with the military beats on the snare drum in the first chorus. In the last few repetitions of the chorus, the background vocals join in to sing in unison and this creates a sociable atmosphere to encourage the audience to sing along:

> Dawn is near. Let's sing it out loud,
> Until the rays of hope shines upon everyone on the island.
> Dawn is near. Let's sing it out loud.
> Once the sun reaches the mountain,
> Then it's time to go home.
> Today is the day for the brave Taiwanese.
>
> **天色漸漸光　咱就大聲來唱著歌**
> **一直到希望的光線　照著島嶼每一個人**
> **天色漸漸光　咱就大聲來唱著歌**
> **日頭一(足百)上山　就會使轉去啦**
> **現在是彼一工　勇敢的台灣人**

The song itself, from the context in which it was written to its content, symbolizes the tension between the two sides of the straits. The reason why the

CSSTA generated objections was mainly due to suspicion of the PRC and KMT governments as the latter seemed to be leaning towards the PRC in its economic policies. Protesters embraced values such as freedom of speech, democracy and Taiwanese identity, which might be compromised if Taiwan was unified with the Mainland, whether by military force or by economic power.

During the occupation, musical performances were staged both inside and outside the Legislative Yuan, and music became a medium for the voice of the opposition. One student who I interviewed, Leo,[18] was one of the musicians who taught the protesters to sing 'Island's Sunrise' after it was written. He was at the frontline when the protest took place and expressed his mixed feelings about the band and the song, and then he outlined how he understood the topics and emotions in the music:

> I've always liked Fire EX. Although I feel slightly embarrassed saying this now because, after the 318 Movement, it seemed to become a 'trendy' thing to like the band […] Fire EX.'s members are older than us; they must have gone through a stage of struggling with identity issues: I grew up in Taiwan and I like it here – why would someone say I am Chinese? Why can't I speak out that 'I am Taiwanese'? Why will I be rejected if I say I am Taiwanese overseas? There is so much contradiction emotionally […] I think Fire EX. has embodied the sense of emotional embarrassment of a whole generation.
>
> (Leo)

TO SING OR NOT TO SING?

With reference to the positions that Fire EX. took in relation to different social movements, Allen, a young musician who is open to the idea of establishing a career in music after graduating from college, described the pressure that he felt whenever he considered tackling political issues such as the two straits and Taiwanese identity in his music:

> I have to think it all through and make sure that whatever I say through music, will be a solid discourse […] I am not prepared for that yet. If I cannot say it with the assurance of meaning every word that I use, I would rather not say anything.
>
> (Allen)

When the China Wind blows, the political climate between the PRC and Taiwan was also thought to change. The 'natural independence' generation became the main audience of popular music in Taiwan. They received an education that still emphasized traditional Chinese literature, geography and history, but they also have a stronger Taiwanese identity compared with previous generations. Therefore, there is space for ambivalence or even stress, especially for musicians. Consequently, the 20-year-old songwriter said he had been thinking about whether to address Taiwan's identity 'every day':

> Researcher: 'As a songwriter, musician and artist, you were saying that there is an expectation from the audience for the musicians to specify what they are opposed to. Do you think this is a huge pressure on you?'
>
> Allen: 'Yes, absolutely. A responsibility'
>
> Researcher: 'Do you feel the sense of responsibility when you compose?'
> Allen: 'Yes'

18. Leo, personal interview in National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, 15 October 2015.

Researcher: 'Would you engage with issues of Taiwan's identity in music?'

Allen: 'Actually, I have been thinking about this every day [respondent laughs] […] well, yes. Ideally, I still want my songs to reflect whatever social challenges there are. If you become a public figure, in some way you are obliged to. I am not a public figure yet so I do not need to worry. It is just because, as I said, I have questions about how some musicians have responded to these challenges, so I hope that if I am saying something, I can 'walk the walk'. My ideological framework has to be strong and complete. If I say I support Taiwan's independence, why? And what is my understanding of this topic? I'd rather engage with it with a thorough critique, or not do it at all'.

WHEN MUSIC AND CROSS-STRAITS RELATIONS COLLIDE

In terms of the changing perception of Chineseness, two recent events in which artists had the choice to address, or were forced to respond to, occurred in early 2016, when Taiwan held presidential and legislative elections. On 16 January 2016, Tsai Ing-Wen won the presidential election. Moreover, Tsai's party, the pro-independence DPP, won more than half of the seats in the Legislative Yuan for the first time in history. Over the previous eight years the KMT has been heavily criticized for being too close to the PRC in its economic policy. Its defeat in the elections seemed to be a result of voters rejecting another four years of closer ties with the PRC.

On 15 January 2016, a day before the election, Tzuyu, a 16-year-old Taiwanese singer, who began her career in Korea performing in the girl band Twice, publicly apologized along with JYP, one of the biggest and most influential Korea entertainment companies, for waving a ROC flag given to her by the production team on a TV programme. She declared: 'There is only one China. As a Chinese, I am deeply sorry to have hurt the feelings of the people of my motherland'. The video swept the Internet and provoked anger among the Taiwanese. The growing demand for conceptualizing Taiwaneseness on the island, a willingness to separate Chineseness from Taiwanese culture and growing pressure from the PRC music market are noticeable factors that may lead to a new level of tensions between artists' political expressions and their career opportunities in this transnational market.

Another event took place in the same month when Freddy Lim, a pro-independence rock singer from the iconic Taiwanese heavy metal band Chthonic, was elected to the Legislative Yuan. He posed a question during a concert in 2014, albeit with a strong sense of 'sadness', which challenged the question of Chineseness in post-authoritarian and postcolonial Taiwan:

> [i]n an island that the Japanese, like Yoshinori Kobayashi, praised as preserving the best parts of Japanese culture, while PRC writers, such as Han Han, consider as possessing traditional Chinese virtue […] May we ask if the Taiwanese are allowed to just be themselves?.
>
> (Freddy Lim)[19]

CONCLUSION: IMAGINING TAIWANESENESS

While the existing literature has located Taiwanese/Chinese musical identities in a broad historical context (Ho 2003; Moskowitz 2010; Ho 2015) and China Wind pop music – even though a relatively new trend – has been well studied

19. Chthonic 'Timeless Sentence' concert, 9 December 2014, remarks before the song 'Broken Jade' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PydlDHDCrks, accessed 18 April 2016).

(Lan 2007; Fung 2008; Chung 2011; Chow and de Kloet 2011), the ethnographic methods employed in this research enrich the existing literature as it reveals the complexities and ambiguities of the audience's experiences and the industry's sophisticated practices.

Perceptions of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness have always been multifaceted. It is important for researchers to examine how these have been constructed and for what purposes. It is inadequate to simply analyse musical texts in an attempt to understand the social meanings of songs or the practices and experiences of listening to music. As Jones (2012: 58) suggests, 'music that resonates with a large group of audience is an outcome of unified, commercial effort around constructing a symbolic good'. This applies in particular to mainstream labels and commercial music products such as China Wind pop music. Taking music industries and the audience into account is essential in order to generate a clearer picture. This is not to say that the aesthetics of China Wind pop do not involve ground-breaking creativity, but the KMT's earlier cultural agenda and a music industry that seeks a pan-national audience have left their mark on Mandopop and on the China Wind musical style.

While the KMT's national narrative might have led people to imagine Chineseness in Taiwan in the past, the 'natural independence' discourse leans towards imagining Taiwaneseness, even though China Wind pop music can achieve great success. As Chua (2001) indicates, pop culture to its consumers can be a passing fad without deep identity investment. At the same time, our audience's experiences illustrate that Taiwaneseness and Chineseness in popular music is not mutually exclusive, given the audience's historical contexts. Moreover, these two sets of ever-changing narratives mobilize identities and construct the boundaries that separate them. Sometimes the signifiers of these cultural references have been used strategically in order to create music to reach an intended audience. Just as 'Blue and White Porcelain's Chineseness connects to the audience culturally, at times, these symbols were deployed as resources to construct and contexualize the audience's identity and their time and place, while 'Island's Sunrise' exemplifies how this symbolization of Taiwaneseness can act as a catalyst for social and political activism.

A China Wind song such as 'Blue and White Porcelain' resonates with Chinese culture on both an individual and a collective basis. Interviewees shared their musical memories of daily events, such as singing Jay Chou's songs on a school bus or all the boys in the class kung fu dancing to 'Nunchucks/shuang jie gun' (2001). Many explained why they feel differently about the songs that they used to enjoy hearing while simultaneously trying to negotiate their relationship with 'China'. Fire EX.'s 'Island's Sunrise' is different in content and context, but the song functions in a similar way: it becomes 'an enabler for articulation of self-identity' (DeNora 1999: 51). As identities are multiple and fluid, these transitions and understandings of the Self are reflected in the practice of their popular music.

The themes and content of popular music, as illustrated by 'Blue and While Porcelain' and 'Island's Sunrise', reflect the politics of identity, while the music audiences engage with helps to shape their identity. Constant negotiations of Chineseness and Taiwaneseness are taking place in both music creation and consumption. Chineseness/Taiwaneseness might also serve as a useful taxonomy in terms of understanding the complex socio-political history behind Taiwan's popular music. However, this dichotomy implies that Chineseness and Taiwaneseness in everyday culture could be imagined as infinite, intrinsically separate and forever stable. The questions around inclusion/exclusion

and the power relations through which the knowledge of 'Chineseness' and 'Taiwaneseness' are formed are also unanswered.

Music can function both as a vehicle that carries beliefs and as a commercial product that reflects the contemporary economic and political climate. Meanwhile discussions with the audience on their experiences with music also reveal multiple identities. The way in which Taiwaneseness and Chineseness wrestle but coexist in today's popular music production is reflected in the struggles of musicians such as Allen. This underlines that the music industry – and even music writing itself –is influenced by this identity struggle.

The landscape of popular music production in Taiwan has changed rapidly. Future studies in this field will need to pay attention to developments in the genre resulting from musical production in cooperation with the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Musicians' collaboration and mobility have existed for some time, but the PRC's opening up has accentuated these factors, while it is worth exploring whether Taiwan's popular music will become even more vocal in performing Taiwaneseness or whether mainstream music will continue to offer a 'safe Chineseness' in response to its production and market demands. Whatever the future of Taiwan's popular music, challenges and narratives will emerge based on questions of identities and cultures. Popular music will undoubtedly play a significant role in these.

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